

Volume I
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QUOTABLE

Beware of the man of one book.

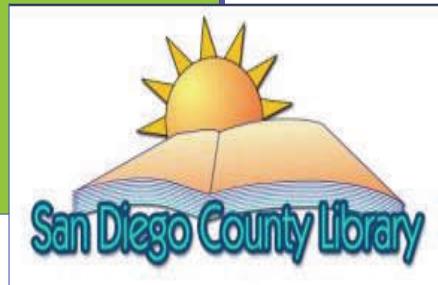
— St. Thomas Aquinas

The back page

LEARN adopting wholesale changes to content and approach to its tutor trainings as its first anniversary approaches

Dyslexia and other learning disorders color many famed figures' places in the public mind

LEARN Alive!



Weekend tutor conference honors 'the shoulders on which we stand'

Titles like “Breathing Words” and “Understanding Those Shoes” and “Making Magic with Multisensory Instruction” might work for children’s stories or independent films, but some might think they’re a little out of their element when it comes to a lofty thing like a literacy tutor conference. Not exactly. The best teaching, in fact, is the product of just such an environment, where imagination invites reality.

On Saturday, June 3, three staff members of San Diego County’s LEARN (Libraries Empower All to Read Now) joined tutors and speakers from across California in the same spirit. The 16th annual READ/San Diego tutor conference, held at San Diego’s Four Points Sheraton Inn, included a slate of 28 meetings on topics such as dyslexia research, the psychology of learning and cues for improved speaking skills. Tom Sticht, noted educator and linguistic scholar, delivered a luncheon presentation that cited the work of seven literacy pioneers — “the shoulders on which we stand,” he said, played a vital part in the evolution of this country’s African American voting practices (see story below).

(See Conference on page 2)

Sticht: Literacy is the foundation of liberty

If history is the best teacher, then historical figures make the most ideal educators. Tom Sticht knows of seven pioneers whose place in time meant the difference in the use of literacy as a vital tool for democracy.

Sticht, an international consultant in basic education, hailed their efforts in his keynote speech at the READ/San Diego tutor conference June 3. Their teaching

techniques, he said, opened the way to wholesale African American voter registration, particularly amid their attention to the students’ needs and interests.

“It isn’t enough to have the method,” he explained. “You have to awaken awareness to the community. You see the power of writing the name, the reality this brings up.”

Sticht traced the group’s advocacy of the link between



Tom Sticht

(See Sticht on page 2)



Yay, team: LEARN staff members and their recruits pose in Balboa Park prior to the San Diego Union-Tribune’s annual Race for Literacy, held May 6 and 7. Library Director José Aponte finished first among all County Library employees, with an end time of just over 36 minutes.

Conference

The sessions included "Taking the Mystery Out of Fractions, Decimals and Percents," a workshop on the application of simple math in everyday learning; "Verizon Literary Campus—Training Resources at Your Fingertips," an overview of literacy education by the telecommunications giant; and "Using a Story to Practice a Multitude of Skills," a seminar on

teaching through the use of anecdote and imagery.

Liam Kerr and Marty Westlin, LEARN's AmeriCorps members, attended "The Psychology of Learning: Teaching and Learning with the Brain in Mind." Instructor Maryann Torbatti outlined findings that reflect the means to retention of information. Reading, she said, affects about 10

percent of the brain's pathways, while sight figures in about 30 percent. Experience, she added, is involved in 80 percent of learning. Teaching affects 95 percent.

"All these facts," Torbatti concluded, "will be out of date 15 years from now"—her clue to the pace of research and a marker for those who attend the conference in 2021.

Sticht

phonics and literacy, a key component in reading instruction. The innovations, which date to the turn of the 20th century, place emphasis on the associations between words and the objects they describe. Notable among the group, Sticht said, is Septima Clark, Rosa Parks' reading tutor. Clark spearheaded a movement that led to the registration of 700,000 black voters. Access to the polls, Sticht said, has led to the liberation of millions of African Americans in the last 50 years.

The methods, Sticht noted, endure amid decades-long shifts in educational approaches. "It's wonderful," he said, "to know we were there before the beginning."

Sticht was president and senior scientist of El Cajon-based Applied Behavioral Cognitive Sciences, Inc., from 1983 to 1999. The former university professor has won numerous awards for his literacy research. His methods have been hailed as among the most influential in the field.

Dyslexia, learning disorders are no respecters of persons

The U.S. Department of Education says 6 percent of school-age children struggle with disorders nobody can see. As invisible as they are, dyslexia and other learning problems can often linger into adulthood. Even so, any number of acclaimed figures have succeeded — nay, thrived — in spite of these obstacles.

Ludwig van Beethoven and Thomas Edison (who were also profoundly hard of hearing), Winston Churchill, John and Robert Kennedy, Tom Cruise, Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Whoopi Goldberg, Leonardo da Vinci, Steve McQueen and



Alexander Graham Bell suffered from dyslexia or a learning disorder of one sort or another (some were touched by both). Author Robert Louis Stevenson was also afflicted with respiratory ailments and suffered bouts of depression. But where there's a will, there's a way — and the world is full of major examples that complement everyday mainstream successes.

Author Robert Louis Stevenson was among a number of acclaimed figures said to have suffered from dyslexia and other learning disorders. He was also a sickly child and missed out on a lot of his elementary education as a result.

New wrinkles on aging skin

LEARN will celebrate its first anniversary on July 1 — and for an old lady, it's looking pretty darn good. Its beginning, marked by a skeletal staff and a short preparation time, has expanded into an emerging force for literacy in San Diego County.

We'll present an expanded piece next month on LEARN's progress, which features refinements in its tutor training programs and an ad campaign that has led to a sudden increase in inquiries among prospective volunteers.

About 20 percent of the adults in San Diego County struggle with reading and writing.

QUOTABLE

If you can read this, thank a teacher.

— **Anonymous**

LEARN Alive!

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